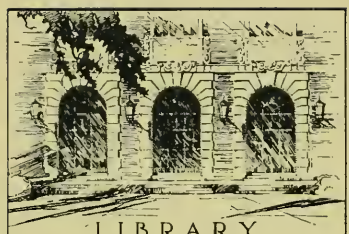

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A

CHARGE

DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF BATH AND WELLS,

AT THE

PRIMARY VISITATION,

MAY, MDCCCXLVII.

BY

RICHARD,

LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS.

LONDON:

F. & J. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, & WATERLOO PLACE.

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H. W. BALL, PRINTER, HIGH-STREET.

TO

THE REVEREND THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF BATH AND WELLS,

THIS CHARGE,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS

AFFECTIONATELY AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THEIR FAITHFUL BROTHER AND SERVANT,

R. BATH & WELLS.

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CHARGE.

My Reverend Brethren,

A Bishop's Visitation,—as being an occasion when the chief Overseer of a portion of the Lord's heritage gathers the entire body of his fellow labourers around him, for the three-fold purpose of the exercise of judicial authority in the way of inquiry; of fatherly admonition and exhortation; and of mutual consultation and encouragement, as becometh brethren, partakers of the same heavenly calling, and sharers of the same responsibilities and trials,—is an event, the importance of which to the Diocese generally, can hardly be over-rated; if only the Bishop and clergy meet together with one object at heart, namely, how they may best turn the occasion to one of personal edification, and the advancement of our Redeemer's kingdom.

It has, however, unhappily come to pass, that the exercise of this episcopal function has become a rarer event now than it was in former times. An office which Saint Basil and Saint Austin felt it their duty to undertake yearly, is, in

these days, held to be sufficiently discharged, by a triennial, or quadrennial observance; and the inevitable consequence is, that the work is, at best, imperfectly performed. There is little vacant time for anything like private intercourse between the Bishop and individuals among the clergy; and even in his public charge, a Bishop must needs feel that there are so many topics of pressing, and of equal importance, on which it is desirable he should dwell,—while consideration for his audience requires that his observations should not be inordinately protracted,—that he is constrained to speak briefly where he would desire to speak at length, and to omit allusion to all matters, but those of most immediate and urgent necessity.

This is my own condition to a harassing and distressing extent on the present occasion, when I meet you for the first time as your Diocesan,—the time itself being one which, as we must all feel, will form no uneventful crisis in the Church's eventful fortunes.

I come among you as a stranger, and my connexion with the Diocese is as yet too recent to have enabled me to establish any claims on your individual regard. But I come among you steadfastly purposing that, with God's help, I will faithfully discharge my office. That office was unsought by me here,—unsought by me

elsewhere;—but it is that of a Bishop in the Church of God: and, however unworthy I may be of so high a calling, however its efficiency may be marred by my own manifold weaknesses and imperfections, I feel that the office which I hold is at once an acknowledged claim on your loyalty and willing obedience in all things lawful; and I have received too much kindness and consideration from you already to permit me to doubt that in the onerous responsibilities which surround me, I shall at all times have your sympathies and charitable constructions,—and, above all, your prayers. Let me have them especially to day, together with your patient allowance under the difficulties of my present address to you, for all that may be said imperfectly, and for all which may be omitted when it ought, in your judgment, to have been said; for I am well aware that many things cannot be touched upon, on this occasion, with respect to which you might fairly expect the expression of my opinion.

Nevertheless, whatever may be the topics which I may be compelled to omit, or merely to glance at, and then leave, I am quite sure that I should not be readily pardoned by you, any more than by myself, if my first address to you from this chair did not commence with some words of reverent homage to the memory of one

who, for more than twenty years, presided over this Diocese, and displayed qualifications for his office, and a zeal in the discharge of its duties, which rendered him worthy of a place in that long succession of illustrious Prelates, with which this portion of God's Vineyard has been blessed. You, my Reverend Brethren, are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably he behaved himself among you. I believe that, if of any man, of him it might be said that his heart's desire was, as a spiritual Father, to shew himself a wholesome example in word, in conversation, in love, in faith, in purity. He was, at all times, ready to consider the good of the Church in this Diocese. The clergy had, at all times, in him a patient listener, and a wise and judicious counsellor. Kind in his manner, paternal in his advice, he was ever accessible on business, and, in doubts and difficulties, his clergy could always turn to him as a friend. His liberality—and I am bound to add that of his Son, while temporarily administering the affairs of his aged parent—are known to you all. It was of a kind to benefit all, save himself and his family. To him we are indebted for the establishment of an Institution, to which I am glad to give this early and public assurance of my countenance and warmest support,—the Theological College at Wells. Originating with others, it

was, as I have said, established by Bishop Law, for it could not have succeeded without his patronage. It was one of his latest acts;—as he himself said, one that he had long desired,—one which he had doubtless well weighed; and I believe it to be one for which future generations will bless him. I consider the benefits which may flow to this Diocese from an Institution presided over and administered as is the College at Wells, to be incalculable; and I have no object more at heart than to give my best encouragement to an establishment which has already proved itself to be so beneficial to the Church, as well as to the individuals whose minds have been trained, and whose principles have been settled, within its precincts.

To the trial which threw its shade over the closing years of my venerable and excellent predecessor, I should not allude, even cursorily, but for one circumstance:—If the Providence of God was pleased to inflict upon you a heavy loss in withdrawing your aged Diocesan from the labours of his Diocese, and making his health unequal to the discharge of his office for some considerable time before his removal to that better world where they who "die in the Lord" do "rest from their labours, and their works do follow them,"—that heavy loss was the means of teaching you more fully than perhaps could have ever been the

case under ordinary circumstances, the amount of obligation which all members of the Church of England in this Diocese owe to the Archdeacon of Bath.

Under ordinary circumstances, I say, those high qualifications for administering the most important functions in the Church, which have now been brought out before us all, would, perhaps, have been known only to few: but the events of the last few years have proved that while he is spared to us—and long and late may the hour be which calls him from us!—the Church in this Diocese has one in her governing body, who is equal to all emergencies, and able to discharge whatever duty may be laid on him, with an ability which is only surpassed by his modesty. When I consider the difficulties and delicacies of his position—the critical character of the times—the dangers and trials which have hung over the Church;—the jealousies and apprehensions which inevitably follow the steps of one who holds the unenviable and anomalous situation of vice-gerent for an authority which seems more or less in abeyance:—when I consider these things, and then hear on all sides the testimony of the clergy of this Diocese, as to the manner in which he discharged the trust committed to him,—with what firmness and tenacity of purpose he adhered to the course which

his conscience told him was the right one;—with what fairness and impartiality he attended to all representations and complaints,—what sound judgment and discretion he displayed in the execution of his office,—with how kind and conciliatory a manner he drew all hearts towards him,—when I see around me the amount of good which he effected, and am not afraid to make that the guage of the amount of evil which, in a quiet way and without attracting observation, he must have repressed,—and when, in addition to all this, I remember the noble act of disinterestedness by which he declined what the law had awarded him as the just remuneration of his labours,—I really feel that no language of eulogium which I can apply to him would be too strong for me to use, or would be more than the voice of the assembled clergy would confirm and corroborate. And if I forbear to dwell upon the subject longer, it is only because I cannot trust myself to speak of my personal obligations to him, and of the respect and affection which I bear him.

And now to pass on to a consideration of those points connected with the general welfare of the Diocese to which, on the present occasion, I am anxious to direct your attention.

And, in the first place, my Reverend Brethren, I thank God, and take comfort amid the cares and anxieties of these distracted times, that on

this our first meeting, when, as I sincerely trust, we have with one heart, as with one voice, been invoking on ourselves and our congregations the healthful Spirit of God's grace, and the continual dew of His blessing, I need not re-open a wound, which, alas! has bled too long, by dwelling at any length on the miserable controversies which for the last fifteen years have harassed the Church, and been a scandal to the world. I cannot, indeed, but be cheered by the conviction that what has taken place is a sign not of death, but of life.—Anything is better than torpor. It was our past torpor which caused our present woe. But I repeat my sanguine conviction that however distressing and humiliating may be the state of things among us, such searchings of heart as we have gone through; such carefulness as hath been wrought in us; yea, such clearing of ourselves; yea, such indignation; yea, such fear; yea, such vehement desire; yea, such zeal; yea, such revenge; can never be displayed in a Church from which Christ hath withdrawn His presence, and which His Spirit hath forsaken as unfruitful, sapless, reprobate. I take all that is past as evidence that we have life still in us,—that we retain the notes of a true Church. My faith tells me that "all things" shall "work together for good to them that love God:"—I read how, sometimes, through the troubling of the waters, a healing power has been conferred on

them. I see around me abundant evidence that eventual good is working out of present evil. I see it in the silent and unsuspected growth of sound Church principles, even among those who have almost professed to hate their very name. I see it in the more just appreciation of the incalculable evils of Romanism on the one hand, and of Ultra-protestantism and Rationalism on the other. I see it in the increasing strictness of the clergy in their lives,—in their increasing devotion to Theological study,—in the increasing care and pains which they bestow on the souls of those over whom they watch as men "that must give account:"—I see it in the increased energy of the Church; in her growing power in many countries, and over many minds:—I see it in the interest excited in behalf of the heathenized masses of our manufacturing population, and in the determined feeling, which every day strengthens, to assert on the Church's behalf her right to give her children a Christian—a Church education.

Nevertheless, whatever good may issue to this Church and Nation from the religious movement of the last fifteen years, I fear that those who come after us, and speak impartially, will find little in the conduct of either of the great parties, which have been in opposition to each other, of which they will be able to speak with unmingled commendation.

On the one hand, a small band of pious, devoted, and humble-minded men—and if there be one person who, more than another, can speak of the purity of their motives, and the piety of their lives, from personal knowledge of both, it is the individual who now addresses you,—betaking themselves almost single handed, and with every chance social and political against them, to the task of fighting the Church's battle, by teaching her children to know their obligations to her, and appreciate the privileges they had forgotten.—This was their first object, and had they rested there, and been content to have foregone the attractions of party, we should not now have to lament over the apostacy of some, and our own loss of men who might have been the ablest champions of our Church. But in a while they gathered disciples round them, and the disciples, I fear, had, in many cases, little of the humility and self discipline of the teachers. Zeal undoubtedly they had, but knowledge, and patience, and discretion were wanting. Hence all manner of needless offence was given,—prejudices were shocked,—trivial details were insisted on before great principles had been established: congregations were called upon to witness alterations in the manner of celebrating Divine service, before they had been taught that what seemed to them novelty was in fact, restoration, and what seemed

to them antiquity was the slovenly carelessness of the last half century. Then came the whirlwind of popular agitation, and in the midst of it they, whose lack of judgment had raised the storm, began to question in themselves, whether they could continue to find peace and safety in the Church of their Baptism. Some of them had already committed the fatal error of confounding what was Catholic with what was Romish, and so they went on step by step, till at length many fell into the sins of apostacy, and schism; and for the time (although for a time only) they identified in the minds of the ignorant and half-educated, the principles of Bull, and Hammond, and Hooker, and Taylor with those of the corrupt, idolatrous Church of Rome.

On the other hand, what has been the conduct of their opponents, of those, I mean, who have brought themselves most conspicuously before the public in all these unhappy scenes? Surely even they in their calmer moments, and when the heats of party have cooled, must blush to think of it; must eventually come to the agony of the confession "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Doubtless their first act was a conscientious one in setting themselves against a grievous error, and they did well to warn the unwary against the cunning craft of Rome. But, who shall excuse their after-acts?

Who shall excuse the utter unscrupulousness of assertion, the reckless calumnies, the cruel insinuations against those who differed from them? What apology can be made for those who themselves mutilating the Prayer Book, and explaining away the literal and grammatical sense of the Articles, with respect to the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were yet not afraid to charge their opponents with double dealing (whether truly or not, is not the question) in this very respect? What shall be said of all the dreadful profaneness of the so-called religious publications which advocated the popular side of the question? What of the methods by which congregations were taught to put themselves in opposition to those who were set over them in the Lord? Surely, my Reverend Brethren, whatever side any one may have taken in the recent controversy, he must feel that his party, *as a party*, has very much to be ashamed of, and happy will it be for him if he have no individual causes for self-reproach.

With such feelings, you will not be surprised at my expression of thankfulness, that the state of religious feeling in this Diocese does not compel me to enter more fully into the controverted questions, or to pronounce, so far as an individual can, a judicial opinion respecting them; and that I have not the painful necessity

laid on me of commenting on unsound opinions, or acts of indiscretion, among the clergy of the Diocese of Bath and Wells; nor on the fierce fanatic spirit of lawless opposition to spiritual authority among the laity, which have alike been so great a shame and reproach to us as a Christian people, in other Dioceses. I therefore thus briefly, but most gladly, dismiss the subject, only beseeching you, my Reverend Brethren, to do all that in you lies to heal the Church's wounds, and not to open them afresh by any exhibition of an indiscreet, intolerant, or uncharitable spirit; and entreating you to be earnest in prayer, that He who is the Head of the Universal Church, would preserve the Anglican portion of it, a sound and healthy member of His Body, that, in the words of Archbishop Laud, "He would be pleased to "fill it with all truth,—*in* all truth, with all "peace;—that where it is corrupt, he would purge "it;—where it is superstitious, rectify it;—where "anything is amiss, reform it;—where it is right, "strengthen and confirm it;—where it is in want, "furnish it;—where it is divided and rent asun- "der, make up the breaches of it." That it would please Him so to direct the course of events, that all which is evil in the late controversies may perish and be forgotten,—and all that is good may increase and prosper. "That"

as an old writer[a] has well said, "we may have "less talking, less writing, less fighting for "religion, and more practice, in order that when "our Great Lord and Master comes, He may not "find us so talking, so writing, so fighting, but "so *doing*." And that both clergy and laity may hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life; and may fulfil the Redeemer's prayer for His own elect, that they may be all one, as "Thou, Father, art "in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be "one in Us."

In proceeding to speak of the state of the Diocese, with respect to the effectual carrying out of the parochial system, it must be obvious to you that I can only speak of the due discharge of what is external; and that, even there, in consequence of the newness of my connexion with you, any personal knowledge must be extremely limited. But the inquiries which I directed to be issued were prepared so carefully—the clergy (speaking generally) have been so willing to give full information—and the returns of the several Rural Deans have been drawn up with so much accuracy and judgment, that I feel I have been put in possession of

[a] Christopher Potter.

all the facts which it is most needful that I should know. For this readiness on the part of the clergy to meet my wishes, I beg to express my thanks, and more especially to the Rural Deans, who in the discharge of an office of anxiety and responsibility, and which has no further reward than its usefulness, have rendered me most invaluable assistance.

I am happy to be able to speak favorably of the condition of the Churches in this Diocese. Out of more than four hundred of these sacred edifices, not more than thirty have been reported to me as being in a bad state, and of those which are unsafe and require to be rebuilt the number is still more limited. Much has been done,—much is doing;—and I earnestly hope no further slackness or delay will be shewn by those parishes which have hitherto neglected their duty to God's house, but that they will at once proceed to restore those fabrics which the piety of a former age prepared for *them*, and which, I trust, *their* piety will transmit unimpaired to future generations. A wide field is here open for Christian liberality, and I am glad to have the opportunity of calling attention to the fact, that the erection of many of the new Churches in this Diocese, and the thorough restoration of others, have been carried out by the munificence of private individuals.

While touching on the highly important subject of Church restoration—and here I beg to call the particular attention of the churchwardens to what I am about to say—I cannot but congratulate all honest-minded churchmen on the satisfactory result of that long pending suit, commonly known as the "*Braintree case*," in which the decision of the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench puts the question of Church repairs beyond all doubt. That decision incontrovertibly establishes the law to be that the parishioners of every parish are bound to pay the expense of repairing the Church, and every other expense necessary for the decent and proper celebration of the services of the Church; that the proper way to do so is by imposing a money rate, and that that rate should be made by the rate payers in vestry assembled; *but that such vestry have no power whatever to refuse a rate for such repairs.*

In passing from the Churches themselves to the Divine Offices solemnized within their walls, I am happy to find that of late years there has been a marked and decided increase in the opportunities afforded to the people for meeting together for purposes of public worship. I trust the day is gone by, never to return again, when all the year round Sunday was the only day on which our Churches would be found open. If, as yet, our congregations generally know little of

the comfort and support of joining in *daily* service,—a comfort and support which they only who have availed themselves of such a privilege can adequately appreciate,—the seasons of Lent and Passion week, Ascension day, the Saints' days, and the Ember days are no longer among things which are unnoticed, or the observance of them looked upon as a relic of superstition. There is no longer anything strange or unusual in Wednesday and Friday prayers, nor in having a Church in a rural district open one or two nights in the week, after the labours of the field are over, for evening prayer, and the familiar exposition of Holy Scripture. Nothing can be more injudicious or less likely to prove successful than any attempt to force privileges on a flock which is unprepared to value them. But I think that experience goes to shew that when the minds of a congregation have been trained to understand why increased opportunities of spiritual edification are desirable, and how they may be found in the way of the Church system fairly carried out, then the people are never slow to avail themselves of such privileges; and as from time to time, and as they are able to bear them, more are gradually conferred, they will appreciate them more and more.

But while I thus speak with satisfaction of the progress of a better state of things among us, I will not conceal my regret that of parishes in

this Diocese with a population which exceeds—and in some instances largely exceeds—four hundred, there are from twenty to thirty in which it appears that there is only one sermon on a Sunday. Considering the habits of our people, and that a portion of almost every household can only attend Divine service *once* in the day, I do feel most strongly that each individual ought to have one opportunity at least of spiritual instruction; and I must therefore beg it to be understood that where the population of a parish exceeds three hundred,[b] *there* I require a sermon in the morning, and either a sermon, or such public catechizing as may be adapted to the profit of the congregation generally, in the afternoon.

I would here observe that this notice of omission of duties is only of a general character; and I confidently hope that such general notice may be sufficient. Should, however, these omissions, or any of them, exist at a future Visitation, I shall feel compelled, however reluctantly, to name distinctly the parishes where they do so exist.

I understand that there is another omission on the part of the clergy complained of, but which I am persuaded arises simply from a mistaken view of the registration act: I allude to the non-

[b] The same requirements will be made in parishes where the population shall be less than three hundred, if the yearly value and other circumstances may appear to me to justify it.

transmission of certified copies of the burial and baptismal registers of your respective parishes each year to the Registry office of the Diocese. This duty is just as incumbent upon you as it was before the passing of the act, and I trust it will be regularly attended to in each year by the minister of every parish.

An inspection of the parochial returns has led me to observe a circumstance to which I desire to direct your attention, with a view to the removal of what I cannot but consider a shame and reproach to us. There are not fewer than one hundred and seventy-seven parishes in this Diocese, some of them, I regret to say, of large population, in which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered only four times in the year; and in eight parishes its celebration is even less frequent.

The twenty-first Canon directs that "In every "parish Church and Chapel where Sacraments "are to be administered in this realm, the Holy "Communion shall be ministered so often, and at "such times, as every parishioner may communi- "cate at least *thrice* in the year, whereof the Feast "of Easter to be one." And, taking into consideration that every member of a household cannot leave home at the same time, it seems absolutely necessary, in order that the Canon may be complied with, that *in every parish* the Holy Communion

should be administered at least six or eight times in the year, besides the Great Festivals. I am not prepared to say that our own Diocese exhibits an example of a worse state of things than is to be found elsewhere. I fear that throughout the country the celebration of the Lord's Supper is far less frequent than it ought to be, and I believe it is to this fact chiefly that the fewness of our communicants is to be attributed. When a privilege is almost wholly withdrawn from the eyes of men, they cease to value it: experience, as they suppose, teaches them that they can do well enough without it. They may gaze at the preparation for its celebration with something of superstitious awe; but they are so far from looking to participation in it as a means of strengthening and refreshing their souls, that they seem to have lost all sense of personal interest, or individual responsibility, on the subject. Yet if, as we all believe, the merits of Christ's atoning Blood are applied to those only who receive Christ in His Holy Sacrament; and if to slight that Sacrament is to slight His Blood, there must be something very wrong in our present system. The preaching, or the practice, or both, must be very deficient which neither instils into the people's minds a desire to become frequent and devout communicants, nor affords them the opportunity of becoming so.

Really when we consider what the early Christians implied when they offered the petition, "Give us *day* by *day* our *daily Bread*:"—really when we reflect what would be said in our own times of a clergyman who only afforded his flock the opportunity of hearing a sermon four times in the year, we must come to the conclusion that the infrequent celebration of the Eucharist among us is very much to be deplored; and I wish it, therefore, to be understood that my opinion is that in all parishes it ought to be administered six or eight times yearly, in addition to its celebration at the Great Festivals; and further, that in every parish where the population exceeds six hundred, there ought to be a monthly communion.

I have spoken of the rareness of the celebration of the Lord's Supper as one cause of the low average of communicants in the adult population of our parishes: but there is another cause to which much of the evil may be traced, and that is our unsatisfactory condition in respect of the Rite of Confirmation, which is the necessary preparation for the Lord's Supper. I had myself the charge of a rural parish for more than thirty years, and therefore I do not speak as one who does not know the difficulties which, in this respect, must be experienced by every clergyman who desires to discharge his duties faithfully by

the younger members of his flock: but a careful investigation of the religious statistics of our parishes, and the observations I made in the course of my Confirmations last year, lead me to believe that more may be done for our catechumens than has yet been effected among us; and, that in point of fact, there is a large body of persons, professedly in union with the Church, who, from some unknown cause, never present themselves at all to the Bishop to be confirmed by him. The subject is so important that I must beg your particular attention to the statement I am about to make.

The population of that part of the Diocese in which Confirmations were held last year (exclusive of Bath, where there are yearly Confirmations), is about two hundred and twenty thousand. The number confirmed, exclusive of Bath, were,—females, three thousand and thirty-six,—males, one thousand eight hundred and nineteen,—four thousand eight hundred and fifty-three in all. That is twenty-two in one thousand, or less than two and a quarter per cent.

Now there are nearly ten per cent. of our population between the ages of fifteen and twenty, and about six per cent. between fifteen and eighteen, in which years most persons are brought to be confirmed. After all reasonable deductions on the score of dissent and other causes, we ought

to look to, at least, four per cent. of the population appearing at triennial Confirmations; whereas, it seems, that in this Diocese the average is little more than two per cent. And the case is still stronger when we take into account that this per centage includes a great number of persons whose age exceeds eighteen years, and if these were deducted, it is probable that the number of those who are at the ordinary ages at which Confirmation usually takes place, that is, from fifteen to eighteen, would not be found to exceed one and half per cent. on the population of the whole Diocese; whereas we have seen that it ought to be at least four per cent. Nor, while adverting to this subject, can I pass over the fact, that on the occasion which has called forth these remarks, there were not a few places with a large population which sent scarcely any candidates to Confirmation,—and some which had none at all.

I fear, therefore, we must come to the conclusion that sufficient care is not taken to ascertain the number of persons in each parish whose years entitle them to a participation in this privilege, or else that from the very defective state of Christian education among us, the clergy feel bound on conscientious grounds to reject the larger number of the candidates.

If the evil is attributable to the former cause, I feel sure, my Reverend Brethren, that to call

your attention to the fact is at once to obviate it. But if it be attributable to the latter, though the remedy is not so easy, you will agree with me that no exertions on our part ought to be wanting which can pave the way for a better state of things.

I know by experience how great are the difficulties and discouragements which attend this part of the pastoral care. There are few tasks more mortifying and humiliating at the outset than the instruction of a group of catechumens in a rural district. The boys and girls who three or four years before left our National or Sunday school, imbued, as we believed, with Christian faith, Christian knowledge, and Christian principles, come back to us, grown indeed into men and women, but with little trace in them of a Christian education; and with a stolidity of manner and inaptness for instruction, which not only testify that their minds have been lying fallow ever since they left school, but which greatly increase the perplexities of those whose duty it is to prepare them for Confirmation.

I dare not, on the present occasion, enter upon a discussion of the defects of our parochial system of education, for I have already trespassed upon your patience for a long time, and the subject is one, which if spoken of at all, must be entered upon fully:—but I must express my decided

opinion, that until the clergy contrive to keep up a connexion with the younger members of their flock throughout the whole period which intervenes between school and Confirmation, the state of our catechumens will not be satisfactory :—and I would further express my belief that the object of keeping up such a communication will be best attained by the establishment of night schools for adults, in which the presence of the clergyman on one or two evenings in the week, (at any rate during the winter months), for purposes of religious instruction, will have the effect both of lightening his own labours previously to a Confirmation, and will enable him to keep a hold over the minds of the younger members of his flock at the very time when the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, are the most likely to seduce them to evil.

In the existing state of things it is certainly far better that but few persons, and those well prepared, should be presented for Confirmation, than that these ceremonies should be attended by crowds of young persons, who have little knowledge of the solemn act in which they are about to be engaged,—little feeling of responsibility with respect to their renewed pledge, and to whom conseqently, the Rite would be a mere form, and therefore worse than useless. It is far

better to reject a candidate than to send him unprepared.

Nevertheless, whatever may be the difficulties attending the instruction of these young persons, they are difficulties which will be found to give way, when fairly met.—A zealous, and discreet minister who adapts his times of instruction to the habits and hours of his people will be able to effect more than he would himself anticipate at the outset of his task; and I have known instances, where, even in summer time, the candidates have been brought together nightly for six or eight weeks consecutively, and where, I need scarcely add, the result has been most gratifying both to minister and people.

I may take this opportunity of mentioning that I have already made some new arrangements with respect to the attendance of the different parishes at certain specific places, with the view of obviating some evils which have fallen under my own observation, and I will endeavour from time to time to carry out any suggestions which may be made by the clergy, whereby I may ensure the more reverent, edifying, and efficacious celebration of this most important Apostolic Rite.

In endeavouring to account to my own mind for the disproportion between the numbers of our

adult population in this Diocese, and of those who are presented to me for Confirmation, one explanation has occurred to me, which I will mention; not indeed,—God forbid!—as believing it to be the true one, but only by way of exciting you to increased exertion in making yourselves thoroughly acquainted with your people. I need not tell you that one of the never-failing evidences of a neglected parish is the paucity of its candidates for Confirmation, and their irreverent behaviour at the time of the celebration of that Rite. Where a clergyman has no systematic plan of parochial visiting, where he has not taken the pains to ascertain who and what are the inhabitants of every house in his parish—of course I am speaking of parishes of limited population—where he is not in the regular daily habit of seeing his people, and conversing with them,—there we may be sure that at Confirmations the catechumens will be unsatisfactory both in numbers and qualifications. Young men and women will not put themselves out of their way to present themselves as candidates; they will be glad to escape the trouble of a course of instruction, and the ordeal of an examination, and if (to use a homely but expressive phrase) they are not well 'looked up,' they will be glad to keep themselves out of sight. They will never be confirmed.

Of all the duties of a clergyman there is none

comparable in importance to that of parochial visiting. Preaching may rouse men, but it is by their own fire sides that the pastor's work is to be done. It is there only that he can learn individual character, there only that he can fully carry out his Ordination vow to "teach the people committed to his charge."

I repeat that I do not attribute the fewness of our candidates for Confirmation to any remissness on your parts in the habit of parochial visiting: I should mourn, indeed, were I compelled to do so. But if any among us feels that he might have done more in this respect than he has done, let me urge him to amend what has herein been amiss; for he may rest assured, that whatever be his talents in the pulpit, however learned he may be,—however seemingly devoted to his Master's service,—unless he knows his people by habits of daily intercourse with them,—unless they learn to recognize in him their father, counsellor, and friend, he cannot be a faithful minister,—and few will be the souls which in the day of account will testify of him, that through his instrumentality they were won to Christ.

I have said so much on matters connected with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, that I must content myself with a brief allusion to the manner in which the other Sacrament is administered among us.

I need not stop to prove to you that Baptism has, in many places, been administered in such a slovenly fashion, and, in times past, so little weight has been given to it as a Sacrament in the public teaching of the clergy, that the people have come to look on it as a mere form,—and even as a form which, under the new law of registration, has become an unnecessary one. I cannot enter now on the Theological controversies which have arisen on this question. No clergyman of the Church of England can deny Baptism to be a Sacrament:—No clergyman of the Church of England will deny that he is bound to obey the Church's rules:—If he does deny either of the points he must do so at his peril—but if he be an honest man, he will no longer profess to remain within her pale, when he has practically abjured her.

What the general custom of this Diocese is with respect to the time of the celebration of Baptism I do not know,—but, this I know, that there is but one period in the course of Divine service, in which the Church permits the public administration of this Sacrament, and that is immediately after the last lesson at morning or evening prayer. And I am quite sure that till this Sacrament is so administered as to be brought before men's eyes and minds continually, they will never learn to estimate its privileges properly.

It must be no longer a candle hid under a bed or a bushel, but a light set on a hill.

I request the clergy, therefore, to instruct their flocks as to what the Church's directions are on this subject, to prepare the way gradually for the re-introduction of this Sacrament at the proper part of the service, and then, in due time, to re-introduce it, wherever the right observance has been laid aside.

There is one, and but one, other subject connected with the public ministrations of the Church to which it is necessary that I should allude, but it is one which has been the subject of much, and, I fear, just complaint, and therefore I would particularly call your attention to it. The subject is that of the irregular solemnization of Marriages.—Already this has given rise to cases of bigamy, and other illegal unions, some of which are very shocking to contemplate. Now the marriage act of George the Fourth enables "every "parson, minister, or curate" to refuse to publish banns of matrimony, unless the persons to be married give "seven days' notice, at least, of the "same, setting forth their Christian names and "Surnames, and the house or houses of their "respective abodes within such parish or cha-"pelry, and of the time during which they have "dwelt, inhabited, or lodged in such house or "houses respectively." If this notice were always

required (and I beg, my Reverend Brethren, that from henceforth you will require it) the intervening seven days would afford to the minister an opportunity of inquiring whether the statements in such notice are true, or not; and thus by a very simple mode, the serious evils complained of would be avoided.

Before I conclude, I desire to make a few remarks on the subject of our Diocesan Societies; those Societies, that is, which are commended to the special support of the clergy and laity of the Diocese, as being under the presidency of their Diocesan, and as being those to the support of which our Diocesan exertions should be restricted. I say Diocesan exertions, because while nothing can be further from my thoughts or wishes than to confine the channels of *private* charity, or to attempt to dictate to public opinion as to which may be the best of many meritorious institutions,—still there must be a limit to those Societies which are commended to the particular care of the Diocese by its Bishop; and I desire to state my opinion that that limit was judiciously fixed by the late Bishop, and that I have not heard any arguments which have inclined me to encourage the extension of that limit. Doubtless there is great room for improvement in the support given to the Diocesan Societies, and in the sympathy evinced towards

them in their efforts to carry out the Church system; but it is no trifling amount of good that has been already gained, and for how much of this we are indebted to the kind and unwearied exertions of our Diocesan Secretary, you, my brethren, no less than myself, must be deeply sensible.

Of two of our Diocesan Societies, that, namely, for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and that for the Propagation of the Gospel, it is unnecessary for me to speak. The claims which both have upon all true Sons of the Church of England are universally admitted, and they need no tribute of commendation from me. I heartily wish, however, that I could have borne my testimony to the munificent manner in which they are supported in this Diocese;—but it is one thing to admit the merit of an institution and another to support it. I regret to say that the laity of the Diocese generally have been very backward in giving their aid to these Societies. The clergy, in proportion to their number, are by far the largest class of contributors, but though they have given, as it appears to me, to the full extent of their means, the painful fact still remains that in a Diocese containing from four to five hundred parishes, and a population exceeding four hundred thousand persons, a sum less than £1,300 a year is contributed to the Propagation of the

Gospel in Foreign Parts.—Really when the spiritual destitution of our Colonies is borne in mind, and the daily renewed appeals from them that we should, "come over and help them" with a body of bishops, priests, and deacons, with catechists and schoolmasters, with churches and schools—really when we consider what England owes to her Colonies, how she has treated them in times past, and what are her responsibilities arising therefrom in God's sight, I do feel the matter is one in which we are bound to bestir ourselves, and it will be a great gratification to me to learn that, by the combined zeal of the clergy and laity, parochial associations in aid of these venerable institutions are being generally formed throughout the Diocese. I believe this would be the means of readily and permanently increasing the incomes of these Societies. The two Societies already mentioned are almost boundless in their sphere of operation, but those remaining to be spoken of, confer their benefits immediately, though not exclusively, on our own Diocese.

The Church Building Association has, in about ten years, been instrumental in promoting the erection of twenty-six additional Churches, in the rebuilding of thirteen, in the enlarging of fifteen, and in the re-seating of twelve. By these various works upwards of twenty thousand sittings have

been, or will be, gained; and of this increased accommodation the very large proportion of three-fourths are unappropriated, and for the free use of the poor. Towards these works the Society has contributed the sum of £8,900, besides having remitted to the Incorporated Society in London the sum of £2,772 to aid its general object of increasing Church accommodation throughout England and Wales. My sentiments with respect to this Society have been already stated in my pastoral letter in its behalf, and I will, therefore, say no more than that I commend it most earnestly to the support of the Diocese, as I do also another of our Diocesan Societies which I fear is not known as well as it ought to be,—that for providing funds for the Maintenance of Additional Curates in Populous Parishes.

One other Institution remains to be alluded to—it is the Diocesan Board for Promoting the Education of the People in the principles of the Church of England. And I believe I shall best promote the interests of that Society by briefly reminding you what are the state and prospects of education in this Diocese. That state, and those prospects, may be described in few words. We are not in the condition in which we ought to be, and we are far from being satisfied with that at which we have arrived; but knowing what is in progress, and looking back to our past

state—bearing in mind at the same time, that the funds at our disposal are very limited, we are gratified by an advance greater than could have been anticipated, or, without God's special blessing, attained.

One of our peculiar difficulties arises from the very nature of this Diocese: it is chiefly agricultural, and composed of small parishes: either, therefore, the means of supporting a parochial school are small, or the burden is oppressive. It is on this ground that every encouragement is needed, to call into existence, and to sustain, schools suited to the wants of small rural parishes.

I have abundent evidence before me that the clergy generally have done much;—that they have worked and are working with an earnestness and single-heartedness which shews their love for the little ones of Christ. Theirs has been no easy task—yet they have set themselves heartily to the work;—they have sewn labour to reap toil, and gain loss: they have overcome prejudice, and warmed indifference into life; but they have lived to see schools rising around them, as the common blessings of the Diocese. There are, however, still many "waste places," and some, as it appears to me, where all advantages are not improved, and others where the benefit of the Sunday's school might be increased into the blessing of daily instruction. On the

whole, progress is steadily made, and the statistics of education throughout the Diocese afford ground of much hope and thankfulness. That forty-one thousand eight hundred and eighty children are in direct communication with the Church, and receiving Daily or Sunday instruction under her superintendence, is a most gratifying fact for a Bishop to record on his first official visit to his Diocese; as also that upwards of £12,000, yearly, is contributed by the clergy and laity towards the effecting what has been already accomplished. Much indeed remains to be done, and a large increase of funds is needful before we can do it. But I confidently trust that the past is a pledge for the future, and if so, we may indeed bless God, take courage, and go forward.

And here, in my own name, and, I am persuaded, I may add in the name of the whole body of the clergy of the Diocese, I beg to offer my best thanks to the Diocesan Inspector of schools, and no less to the District Inspectors, for their kind and most valuable assistance. At no little cost of time and labour to themselves they have discharged an office of great responsibility and great delicacy: and for much of the satisfaction which we must all feel at the progress of Church education throughout the Diocese, we are doubtless indebted to them.

And now, my Reverend Brethren, after exhausting your attention with such a lengthened address, one word more of practical exhortation shall set you at liberty. And what shall that word be? Surely that which the character and temper of the times, and the state of the Church, seem to make most needful that I should urge upon you.

I will not recall to you now the nature of those vows which bind you to spend and be spent for Christ, for I have the confident hope that you bring them before your own minds continually. I will not exhort you to increased devotion to the spiritual interests of the flocks committed to you, and for which hereafter you must give account, because I have many proofs that in your vocation and ministry you are, as a body, daily advancing the spiritual interests of your people. I will not remind you that on the exertions made by the present body of clergy in the Church's present opportunity of comparative rest, depends, in all human probability, whether our candlestick be removed from its place, in just judgment on our national transgression, or whether it shine forth as a light to lighten the whole earth; because I believe that each day must strengthen this conviction on all our minds. Nor will I dwell on the necessity that, if you are to influence men's hearts and lives, your own

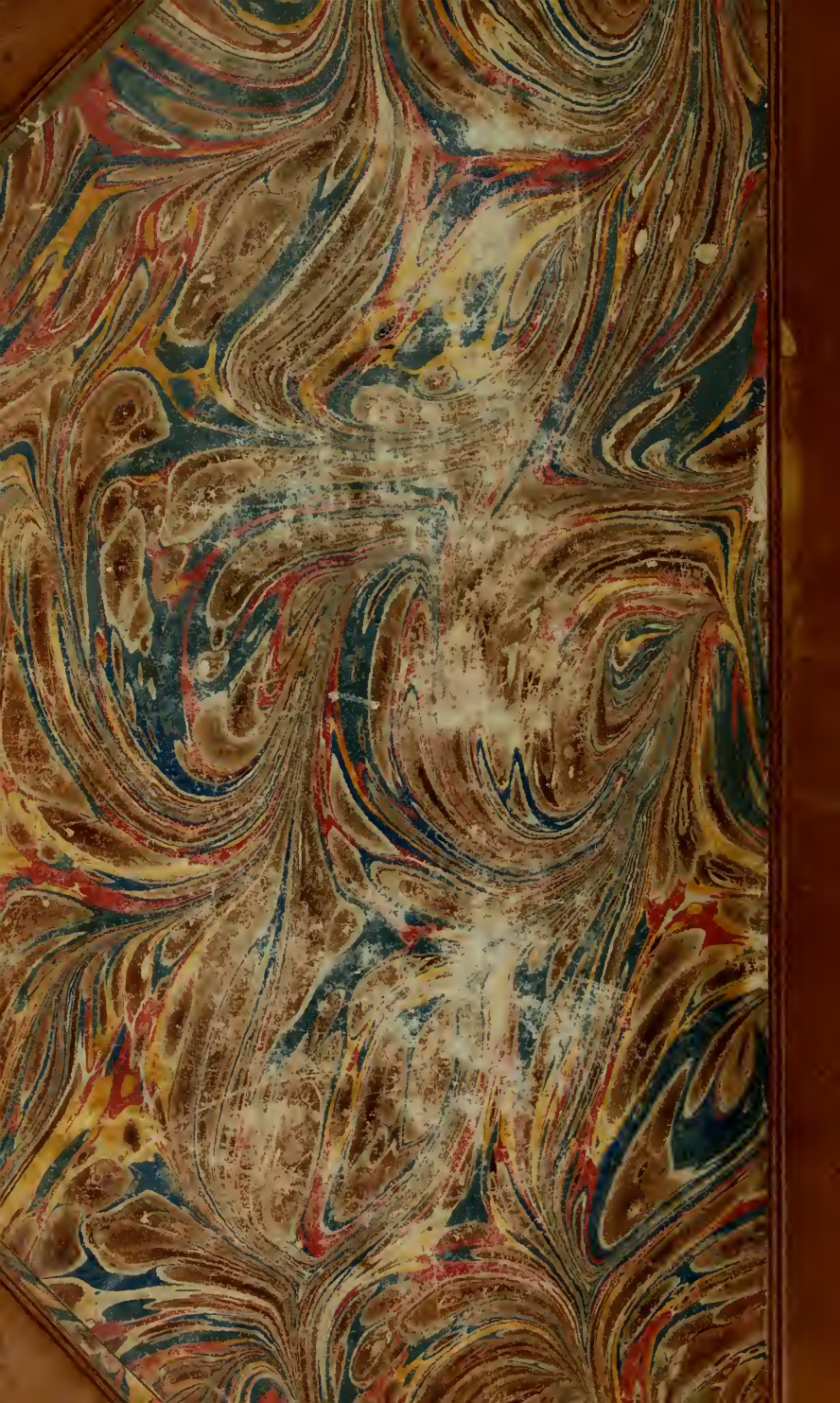
characters must exemplify the loveliness of the doctrines which you preach.—Nor, lastly, will I urge on you the importance of keeping up your Theological studies, and so arming yourselves with weapons of proof, as that from whatever quarter the adversary may come, you may shew yourselves able defenders of the doctrine and discipline of our holy Church, (and therein of Gospel truth), for we have been all taught of late the need there is of a learned clergy;—we must feel our deficiences in this respect; and therefore I trust it will be a matter of conscience with us to avoid the stigma which would inevitably fall upon us, if in time of trial we were unable to vindicate the truth of what we teach, and the authority by which we teach it.

No—my Reverend Brethren,—my parting word of exhortation to you shall be this, that you "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," that you "seek peace and ensue it." Truth is of course the first thing to be desired, but the second is peace. And never had the Church a greater need that a spirit of peace, of forbearance, of brotherly union should be found among her children. How can a disunited clergy hope to influence the laity? How can a laity distracted by party feelings on religious matters, be brought to that humbleness and docility of spirit, without which no teaching, however sound, will produce

a permanent influence on the heart.—Let me entreat you then, my Reverend Brethren, to do all that in each of you lies to make our Church as remarkable for peace and unity of spirit, as of late years she has been a world's wonder for her discords and controversies.—Look well into your own conduct, see wherein you have been tempted to use intemperate language, and to pass hard judgments:—see wherein you have let yourselves be swayed by unreasonable prejudices, and wherein you have been ready to think the worst instead of the best of those who differ from you:—see whether you do not sometimes raise non-essentials into essentials, and argue and combat for them accordingly:—see whether you may not have sometimes taken a course more likely to irritate than conciliate, whether there may not occasionally have been more zeal to denounce than restore, a weak, or wavering, or erring brother. If the conscience of any of us does not wholly acquit us in these respects, let us aim at attaining a more disciplined spirit for the time to come. Let our words be few, and let them be well weighed. Let our judgments be fewer still. Let each of us look at our own weaknesses, and negligences, and ignorances, before we proceed to measure those of our Brethren. Let us forbear one another in love. Yea, let us forbear one another, and forgive

one another even as Christ hath loved and forgiven us.

So may we hope to be gradually fitted for the reception of the Lord's choicest gift,—that our Church may not only be pure in doctrine, and holy in her members, but that she may also be at unity in herself;—that "as there is but one "Body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our "calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one "God and Father of us all;—so we may hence-"forth be all of one heart and one soul, united "in one holy Bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith "and Charity."

THE END.

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